



# Best Southeast Cities for Defense Jobs

By Tranette Ledford and ClearanceJobs.com

**Miles of coastline and balmy weather have always drawn vacationers to the southeast United States. Now it's drawing another community — only they're coming to work. The defense industry is swelling throughout this region, and Florida is a prime example.**

Once synonymous with sunshine and the perk of having more golf courses than any state in the union, Florida now holds the distinction of being home to one of the nation's largest defense and homeland security clusters. The economic impact on the state is now at \$52 billion.

Enterprise Florida, a partnership organization devoted to the state's economic development, reports that the military and defense communities now support more than 723,000 jobs. Factor in the extra \$8 billion the defense industry is predicted to pump in over the next two years, and it equals great job prospects for candidates with the double asset of military experience and an active clearance.

## Tampa/St. Petersburg

The Tampa/St. Petersburg region is no diamond in the rough. It's a multi-faceted defense hub, one that's becoming a showcase piece of job market geography. In the small space between the two cities, the relationship between the business, military and defense communities is getting closer all the time. In large part, this is due to the fact that Tampa serves as home to MacDill Air Force Base – the chief headquarters for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

### High Growth Defense Jobs

Location	Common Jobs
Tampa/St. Petersburg	Storage Engineer, Help Desk Technician, Information Security Analyst
Orlando	Systems Engineer, Database Administrator, Satellite Operator
Huntsville	Electrical Engineer, Systems Engineer, Computer Aided Designer

Source: ClearanceJobs.com



Among MacDill's tenants are two strategic military commands — U.S. Central Command and Special Operations Command. But the installation's impact falls well outside the gates, heavily influencing the aerospace and port industries, with Tampa sitting on the largest port in the state. The base also houses Coalition Village, a military cooperative coalition that the Air Force has dubbed 'the nerve center' in the global War on Terror.

Given these sectors, there's an ongoing need for cleared personnel with technical, computer and engineering skills, as well as those with backgrounds in international affairs, intelligence, and languages. Other opportunities not directly related to security include life sciences, business and program management, and finance.

While BRAC relocated some jobs to MacDill, the bulk of civilian opportunities requiring clearances are those within companies directly doing business with the government. DRS, Harris, Boeing, Computer Sciences Corporation and L-3 Communications all have a strong presence here, and all have an ongoing demand for cleared personnel from a wide range of disciplines.

There is also a growing community of defense related firms involved in classified or 'dark' operations. Understandably, these careers tend to stay below the radar. "Transitioning service members and civilians with active security clearances may be well qualified to step into these restrictive positions," says Evan Lesser, Director of secure job placement website ClearanceJobs.com. "Finding these jobs can be tough, as they aren't usually advertised in public." Best idea? Posting resumes on sites like ClearanceJobs.com where employers staffing these roles tend to search and contact candidates rather than posting job announcements. This way, candidates can get assistance from firms that have cultivated a long standing reputation for connecting qualified personnel with industry hiring managers.

Outside the defense sector, the high tech industry is also hot, employing more than 56,000 workers. And according to Maryanne Fiala, executive director, American Electronics Association, Florida Council, this industry continues to grow.

"There are security clearance requirements for a number of these jobs," said Fiala. "But even if the job doesn't require

### Average Security-Cleared Salaries

Location	Salary
Tampa / St. Petersburg	\$68,832
Orlando	\$62,125
Huntsville	\$67,812

Source: ClearanceJobs.com

### Top 20 Highest Salaries by Job Category

Job Category	Salary
IT Management-Executive	\$116,935
Database Admin-Oracle	\$101,905
IT Management-Project Manager	\$100,089
Project/Program Management	\$94,231
Systems Engineer	\$93,202
IT Software-Java/J2EE	\$93,036
Engineering-Aerospace and Aviation	\$92,923
Software Development	\$91,273
Network/LAN/WAN Design	\$84,545
Security-Network Management	\$83,309
Security-Intrusion Detection	\$83,158
IT Software-Prog	\$83,125
Engineering-Military Software	\$82,821
IT Hardware-Unix	\$82,708
Engineering-Military Hardware	\$80,625
Engineering-RF	\$80,500
Engineering-Electrical	\$80,392
Contract Admin	\$78,600
Engineering-Telecommunications	\$76,293
Linguist, Translator or Interpreter	\$70,952

Source: ClearanceJobs.com

one, having a security clearance is never a disadvantage. Employers always see it as a value-add for future work with the government.”

As for quality of life in Tampa and St. Petersburg, the two cities have a large military retiree community with three VA hospitals and the largest base exchange in the nation. The median home price of \$228,000 is below the national average, but there are lower priced homes in good communities. Fiala said recent salary surveys put the average salary for technical workers at \$64,400.

## Orlando

It’s not just about Disney World anymore. At first glance, Orlando won’t yield sights of major military installations — the air fields are gone, as are the bases. But the list of Orlando employers reads like a Who’s Who in the defense industry playbook.

“Every major defense company has a presence here, as do mid-sized and smaller firms,” said Russ Hauck, executive director, National Center for Simulation. “Orlando has become the hub of military modeling and simulation. This brings military personnel and defense firms and companies that provide related support services, spin off technologies and training curriculum development. General Dynamics, SAIC, Raytheon, Lockheed, they’re all involved heavily in training and simulation. They’re very selective in hiring, so service members and civilians with security clearances have good opportunities here. ”

Hauck explained that despite the advanced technologies used in training and simulation, the skill sets hiring managers look for go well beyond science and engineering.

“These companies need subject matter experts,” he said. “If you were in infantry or a tank driver, we have firms working in tank driver simulation and tank gunner simulation. There’s a variety of capabilities service members of all skill levels can provide.” ClearanceJobs.com currently lists a wide range of open positions for the Orlando area including logistics and supply chain experts, systems and software engineers, and IT gurus.

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In addition to good weather, local attractions and affordability, Orlando also offers competitive salaries. Engineers earn an average of \$85,000, while software developers and programmers earn averages of \$60,000. The median home price for August, 2008 is \$224,000, and the downturn in the housing market currently gives buyers better prospects and negotiating power.

## Huntsville

It’s green, it’s growing — and it’s fair game for transitioning service members and civilians with active security clearances. Since hitting the map in the 1960s for its role in space and rocket technology, Huntsville, Alabama has been a quiet presence at the foothills of the Appalachians. Not that there hasn’t been plenty going on — it’s just that Huntsville is now getting renewed attention.

As a place to live, numerous organizations bill Huntsville in their top ten. It’s an environmentally friendly city, one with family perks like music, theater, sports, gardens, and museums. The average home costs \$168,500, and the average income is about \$75,000. It also gets top billing for its job market.

Huntsville’s motto — ‘The sky is not the limit’ — definitely applies to the rise in defense industry jobs. Expansion Management Magazine calls it one of the top 10 places for scientists and engineers.

Military presence is always a good indicator that government contractors are nearby and hiring. Redstone Arsenal, Marshall Space Flight Center and Space and Missile Defense Command are already there, with Army

Materiel Command and the Missile Defense Agency coming soon. Positioned alongside are numerous aerospace related businesses like Boeing and Booz Allen Hamilton, which each announced more than 400 positions in 2007.

Jobs in other industries are also plentiful — computer sciences and integration, communications services, engineering and biotechnology to name a few — and all are attracted to candidates with active security clearances.

“Growth in Huntsville has been exceptional,” said Lesser. “We’re showing upwards of 50 percent more jobs posted in the past year for the area. Northern Alabama is widely known as the aerospace capital of the eastern U.S. All the primary defense contractors are located here, and engineering, IT, and support staff jobs are plentiful. The low cost of living and tight sense of community make Huntsville a desired location for anyone looking to get away from a fast-paced lifestyle.” No doubt, Huntsville’s nickname as the ‘Rocket City’ is well-deserved.

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